

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2010

Present: Ald. Schnipper (Chairman), Lennon, Albright, Crossley, Danberg, and Lappin

Absent: Ald. Gentile and Salvucci

Also present: Ald. Ciccone, Johnson, Fuller, Linsky, Yates, Shapiro, Swiston, Sangiolo, Baker, Hess-Mahan, Blazar, Merrill and Fischman

Chairman's Note: The Committee met jointly with the Programs and Services Committee to hear a presentation from His Honor the Mayor regarding possible reorganization plans for the Public Works Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and Public Buildings Department. The proposed reorganization presentation is attached. The presentation was intended to be an initial briefing to generate discussion, questions, and suggestions that the Aldermen may have regarding the reorganization.

The Mayor presented his vision of the reorganization of the Public Works Department, Public Buildings Department and the Parks and Recreation Department. The reorganization will consolidate maintenance functions under one department, which will allow the City to create a capital planning function to prioritize capital projects, provide better planning and project management for the City's long-term capital investments. Included in the proposed organizational structure is a Capital Planner position, which will be located in the Public Works Department but report to the Mayor. The Capital Planner will be vitally important in terms of the long-range capital plan and capital improvement program including the schools. The Mayor believes that the City needs to have a vision of maintenance and one system in place that tracks what the City is spending and how it is being spent. The City also needs to operate as efficiently as possible and the reorganization is a step towards that efficiency.

The reorganization will consolidate similar functions in the three different departments and eliminate duplication. The proposed reorganization requires no additional staff but there is the potential for reduction in staff. It also offers streamlined emergency operations. The Mayor concluded the presentation to the Committee.

Ald. Fuller asked what the Mayor is planning regarding school maintenance. The Mayor responded that he has had some conversations with the Superintendent of Schools and Arthur Cabral, Public Buildings Commissioner, regarding school maintenance. The Mayor is looking to implement one uniform system to address building maintenance. Ald. Albright asked where new construction fit into the reorganization. The Capital Planner will oversee new construction. Ald. Yates requested more detail regarding building maintenance responsibilities under the proposed reorganization. Under the reorganization the entire Public Buildings Department, will fall under the Public Works Department. The Mayor will provide further detail on how the departments would be merged and function as a whole. Ald. Danberg wanted to be sure that the City employed a Capital Planner with architectural and construction expertise to address renovations and construction. Ald. Crossley stated that she would like to see a comprehensive inventory of the City's capital assets. The Mayor responded that it is one of his highest priorities. Ald. Baker

inquired about collective bargaining issues, outsourcing to take care of extra demand, and building upkeep, in terms of facility management. Ald. Johnson shares the concern of Ald. Albright regarding managing new construction. She asked for a definition of the Capital Planner position. It would be helpful if the Mayor could provide some information on what other communities with proven organizations structures have done. The Mayor responded that he would provide the information requested to the Aldermen.

Ald. Schnipper suggested that the Aldermen either contact the Mayor directly or provide questions to the Clerk's Office to be forwarded to the Mayor for further detail information regarding the reorganization.

#368-08 ALD. LINSKY requesting approval of the Board of Aldermen of the design for improvements affecting the area where Walnut Street, Lowell Avenue and Watertown Street intersect including a traffic island, curb extensions and the dead ending of Lowell Avenue. [10/14/08 @ 12:53 PM]

A) Board of Aldermen approved curb extensions and traffic island @ the intersection of Walnut Street & Lowell Avenue on 11/16/09

B) On 11/18/09 the Committee approved a request for trial of one- way on Lowell Avenue from Walnut Street to Watertown Street. On 12/07/09 the Board of Aldermen denied the request for a trial.

ACTION: B) APPROVED 5-1 CLOSURE OF LOWELL AVENUE @ WATERTOWN STREET (Lennon opposed)

NOTE: Clint Schuckel, Traffic Engineer, began the discussion on the item. The area where Walnut Street, Lowell Avenue and Watertown Street intersect has been in a traffic trial state for a very long time and it would be good to have a final decision on the dead ending of Lowell Avenue at Watertown Street. Mr. Schuckel reviewed the history of the item using the attached PowerPoint presentation. In July 2005, the Lowell Park Area Improvements Project was started and it had two main components. The first was to improve the vehicular and pedestrian safety around Lowell Park because of the unclear right of way, driver confusion, and accident history. The other component is the reclamation of the triangular area of land formed by the intersections as parkland. The traffic and park improvements are to be funded through Community Block Grant (CDBG) Funds.

At the previous Public Facilities Committee meeting of November 4, 2009, the Committee approved the traffic island and curb extensions at the intersection of Lowell Avenue and Walnut Street. At the November 18, 2009 meeting of the Committee, a request for the trial of a one-way on a portion of Lowell Avenue from Walnut Street to Watertown Street was approved. The Board of Aldermen denied the request for the trial on December 7, 2009. At this point, the Committee has the option of recommending the closure of Lowell Avenue at Watertown Street or re-opening that portion of Lowell Avenue to through traffic.

Ald. Lennon inquired how much the trial and island at Lowell Avenue and Walnut Street had cost the city and where the Public Works Department ranked the traffic improvements to the intersections in terms of priority. The island and roadway striping were paid for through the Department of Public Works budget; however, they were not very expensive. If the Board of Aldermen approves the traffic improvements, there would be cost sharing between CDBG. Ald. Lennon stated that is often difficult to explain to constituents how the City chooses a project to

fund, particularly CDBG projects. Often times a CDBG project requires matching funds from the City, and the City cannot provide matching funds to every project. Ald. Lennon stated that he would hope that the Lowell/Walnut/Watertown and Crafts intersections are high on the priority list for safety improvements. Commissioner of Public Works Tom Daley responded that the project has been on the department's radar for a long while. The previous Mayor wholeheartedly supported the project, as he believed it was key to the safety of pedestrians in the area. The Public Works Department does not have the funds to move forward with the improvements without the CDBG funding.

Ald. Albright pointed out that there appear to be two major issues for neighborhood residents. The residents along Watertown Street between Crafts and Walnut Streets cannot exit their driveways due to traffic. Mr. Schuckel responded that the opening of Lowell Avenue would not improve that situation. The traffic blocking the driveways is westbound traffic, which would not change if Lowell Avenue were opened to through traffic in the eastbound direction. The second issue relates to the difficulty that trucks and buses have making the right-hand turn from Walnut Street to Watertown Street. Mr. Schuckel explained that the City does not have the real estate to design every intersection in the city to be tractor-trailer friendly. However, the MBTA buses and City fire engines are able to make the turn. Ald. Lennon pointed out that often times a large truck would go straight on Walnut Street and turn further up at Linwood Avenue, as there is less cross traffic to interfere with the right turn at that intersection. Ald. Johnson asked how the turning radius at the intersection at Adams and Watertown Streets intersection compared to the Walnut and Watertown Streets intersection. Mr. Schuckel responded that the turn onto Adams Street from Watertown Street is much tighter for trucks, as Adams Street is narrower than Walnut Street. The intersection of Washington and Adams Streets would give the largest turning radius of the three intersections.

Ald. Ciccone pointed out that there are a number of companies on Adams Street that use large trucks and the trucks need access to the street. The limited turning radius at Walnut and Watertown Streets restricts the options truck drivers have to go to Adams Street. Truck drivers do not want to cross the double yellow line when they make the turn, as it is illegal. The truck drivers are now using alternative routes to Adams Street, which run through very residential neighborhoods. Ald. Ciccone felt that the Aldermen should look at the area during school release and rush hour before they make a decision on whether to close Lowell Avenue. Trucks and buses cannot make the right turn onto Watertown Street during that time without waiting for the lane next to them to clear, which creates congestion at the intersection. It is Ald. Ciccone's belief that if Lowell Avenue is a one-way between Walnut and Watertown Streets it will alleviate the school release and rush hour traffic. The Chair stated that although the Committee approved a trial of a one-way at that location, it failed at the full Board. Ald. Linsky felt that the request for a one-way trial failed, as it was unclear how the intersection at Watertown Street and Lowell Avenue would be configured.

Anthony Pellegrini, 56 Clinton Street, stated that he strongly supports a one-way on the portion of Lowell Avenue between Walnut and Watertown Streets. The problems on Watertown Street are mostly westbound issues. The eastbound traffic flow is not a problem and can accommodate the addition of eastbound traffic from Lowell Avenue. John Cedrone, 331 Newtonville Avenue, voiced his opposition to the closure of Lowell Avenue.

Ald. Lappin moved approval of the closure of Lowell Avenue at Watertown Street, as the Traffic Engineer and the crash rate data contained in the presentation suggest that the closure improves safety. Ald. Lennon requested data on the funding, cost estimates and prioritization of the project before the full Board meeting. Ald. Crossley was concerned that the City does not have a prioritized list of road construction projects. The City does prioritize reconstruction but generally not traffic improvements. If the Public Works Department is doing a reconstruction, it seeks input from the Traffic Engineer and residents about the possible inclusion of traffic safety enhancements. The Committee voted in favor of the motion by a vote of five in favor and one opposed.

REFERRED TO PUBLIC FACILITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

#39-10 **HIS HONOR THE MAYOR** requesting authorization to appropriate and expend ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) from parking meter receipts for the purpose of purchasing 450 programmable parking meter mechanisms. [01/26/10 @ 6:11 PM]

ACTION: **APPROVED 4-2 (Albright and Lennon Opposed)**

NOTE: Traffic Engineer Clint Schuckel presented the request for funds to purchase of 450 programmable parking meter mechanisms. The Board of Aldermen recently approved an increase in the parking meter rates. The Public Works Department hired a contractor to reprogram the parking meters to reflect the new rate. The contractor discovered 450 parking meters that could not be reprogrammed due to their age of 15 years or more. The City is losing approximately \$4,000 a month because of the un-programmed meters. The installations of the parking meter mechanisms will pay for themselves in about five months.

Mr. Schuckel realizes that coin meters are becoming out of date, as card technology for meters advances. However, the City is losing a significant amount of money, which can be quickly recouped with the replacement of the parking meter mechanisms. A card program would take longer to establish, as the City would need to purchase card reader mechanisms at \$80 a mechanism and determine the appropriate card reader technology to employ. The additional revenue generated from the reprogrammed meters will help fund the purchase of newer technology to eliminate coin.

Several Committee members stated that they have heard from residents regarding the increased meter rate and the inconvenience of having to have a large number of coins available for long-term parking. Mr. Schuckel responded that there is a proposal to expand the commercial parking permit program to include long-term commuter parking for Newton residents. Ald. Albright was concerned about taking up all the long-term spaces every day including Saturdays. Mr. Schuckel explained that the inclusion of Saturday permit parking is under discussion and it is not clear that Saturdays will be included in the program.

Commissioner of Public Works Tom Daley informed the Committee that the purchase of the new parking meter mechanisms would generate revenue that would be used for pay stations in municipal parking lots and card reader technology for all the City's parking meters.

Ald. Lennon questioned why the 450 parking meter mechanisms could not be both card and coin capable. Mr. Schuckel responded that the 450 meters are not located in one area but spread throughout the City. If the meters were card readable, they would be sporadically placed in the

City. He also pointed out that the City still needs to determine what type of card program it wishes to use. Credit card use for meter payments poses a set of issues, credit card associated fees for example, that may create problems for the City. He is currently investigating the use of a card that would work in the parking meters and at local vendors. The card program will require additional funds that are currently not available but will be when the parking meter receipt fund is built up.

Several Committee members were dismayed that the City was not ready to move forward with card technology. They felt that the appropriate time to address the card reader issue was when the rates were increased. Committee members urged Mr. Schuckel to install the pay station in the Cypress Street parking lot and begin the transition to card reader technology. Mr. Schuckel is working on it and will be coming back to the Board with a plan. Ald. Lappin moved approval of the item, which carried by a vote of four in favor and two opposed.

#24-10 ALD. ALBRIGHT requesting a discussion regarding requiring any utility company that requests permission to bury wires in the street (to handle increased capacity or for any other reason) be required to: (1) choose a section of the street that has enough clearance to add additional conduit at the time of the work, or in the future, to bury additional conduit; (2) to add sufficient conduit to bury that utility's wires currently on the poles on that street at the time the work requested is undertaken. 01/11/10 @ 11:47 AM]

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee held the item without discussion.

#418-09 ALD. ALBRIGHT requesting discussion with NStar Electric Company regarding standards for installing underground conduits and the possibility of providing additional conduit for future undergrounding projects.

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee held the item without discussion.

#111-09 ALD. ALBRIGHT AND MANSFIELD requesting discussion of recent information (made available to the Land Use Committee) from NStar related to double poles, focusing on the 350 double poles waiting only for removal of wires or streetlights by the City of Newton.

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee held the item without discussion.

#457-08 ALD. LAPPIN AND SALVUCCI requesting discussion with NStar regarding the timely repair of City streetlights and the development of a standard response timeframe. [11/20/08 @ 12:51 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee held the item without discussion.

#367-09 PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE requesting discussion with the Law Department on how to resolve the dispute with NStar regarding whose responsibility it is to repair the streetlight connection between the manhole and the base of the streetlight. [10/21/09 @ 9:00 PM]

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee held the item without discussion.

#385-07 ALD. SCHNIPPER AND GENTILE updating the Public Facilities Committee on the progress of the Newton North High School Project. [11/21/07 @ 10:23 AM]

ACTION: **HELD 6-0**

NOTE: The Committee held the item without discussion.

All other items were held without discussion and the Committee adjourned at approximately 10:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sydra Schnipper, Chairman

Proposed Reorganization



PRESENTATION TO BOARD OF ALDERMEN

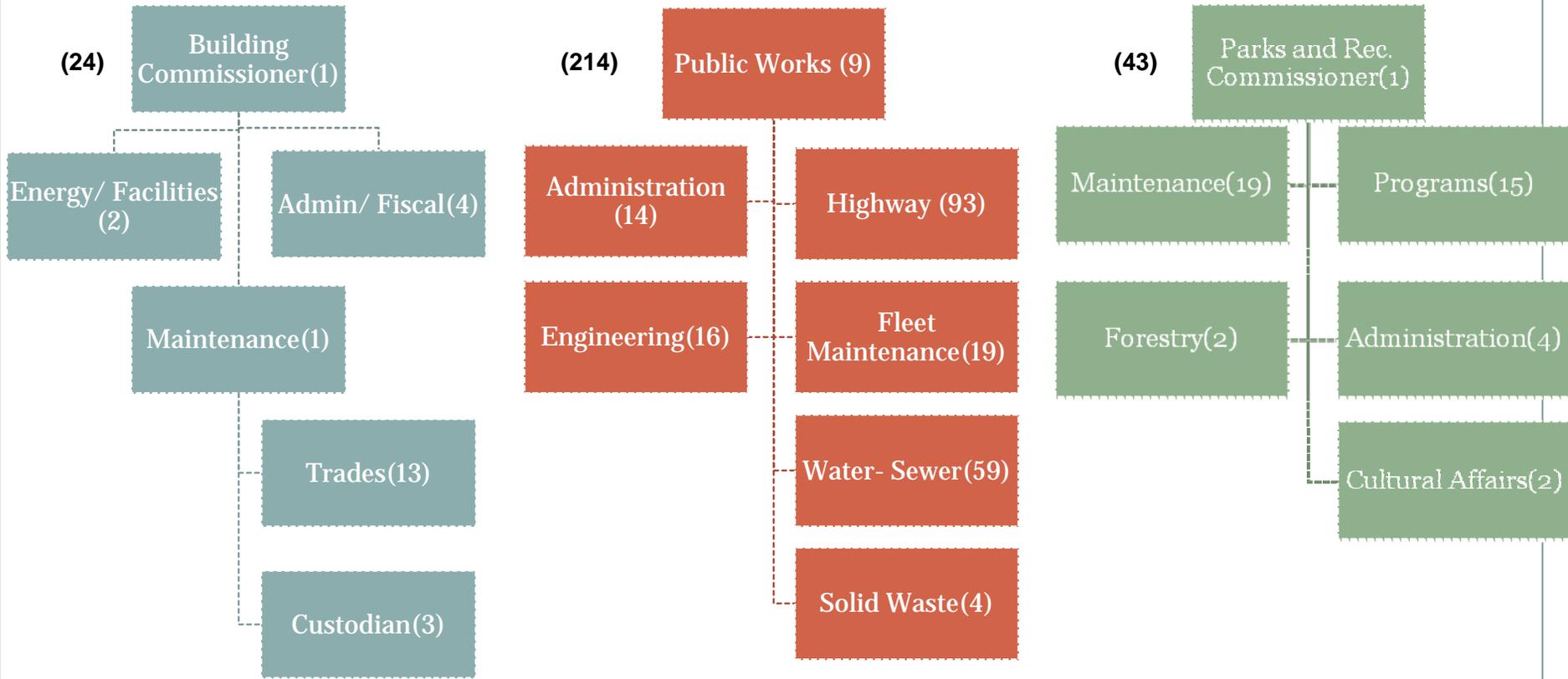
FEBRUARY 3, 2010

Specific Changes

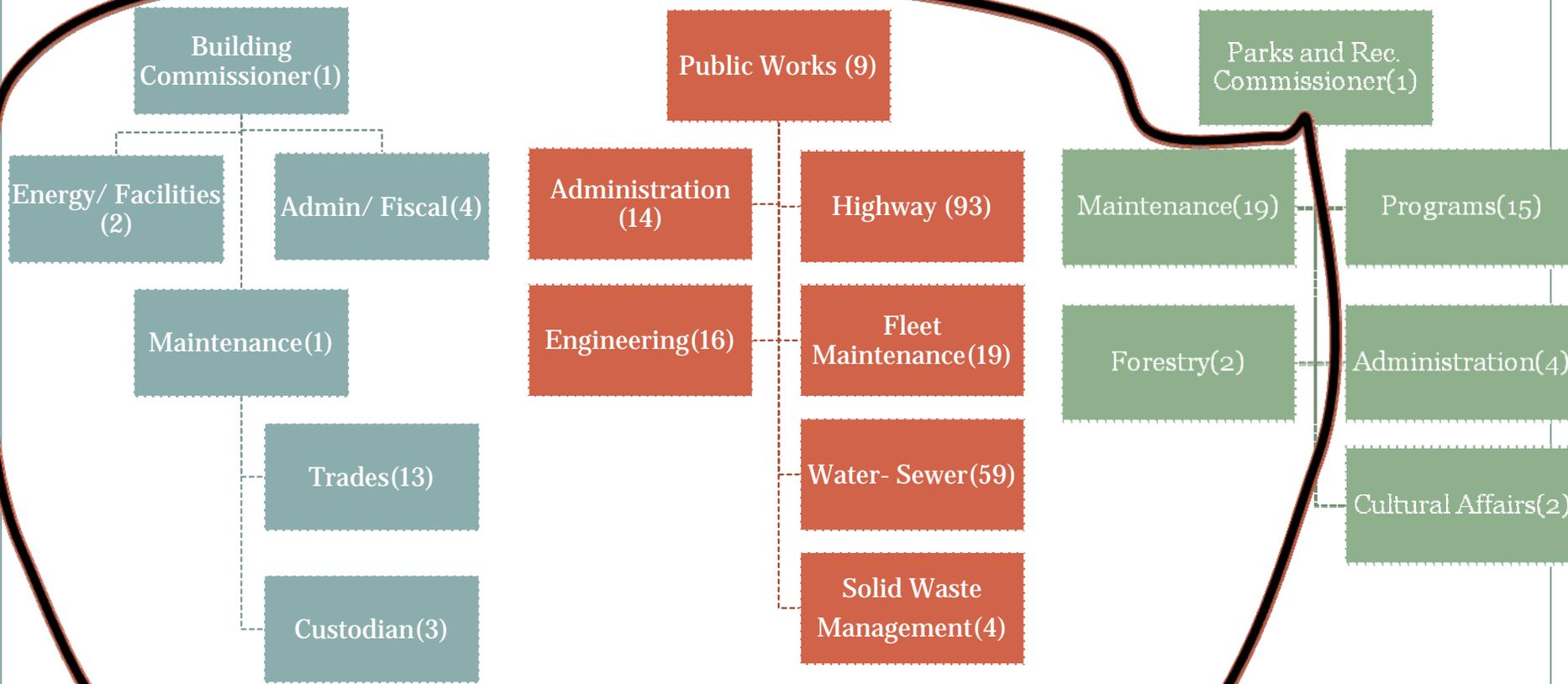


- **Consolidate maintenance functions under one roof**
- **Create a capital planning function dedicated to:**
 - Prioritizing capital projects
 - Planning and project management
 - Long-term capital investments

Current Organizational Structure

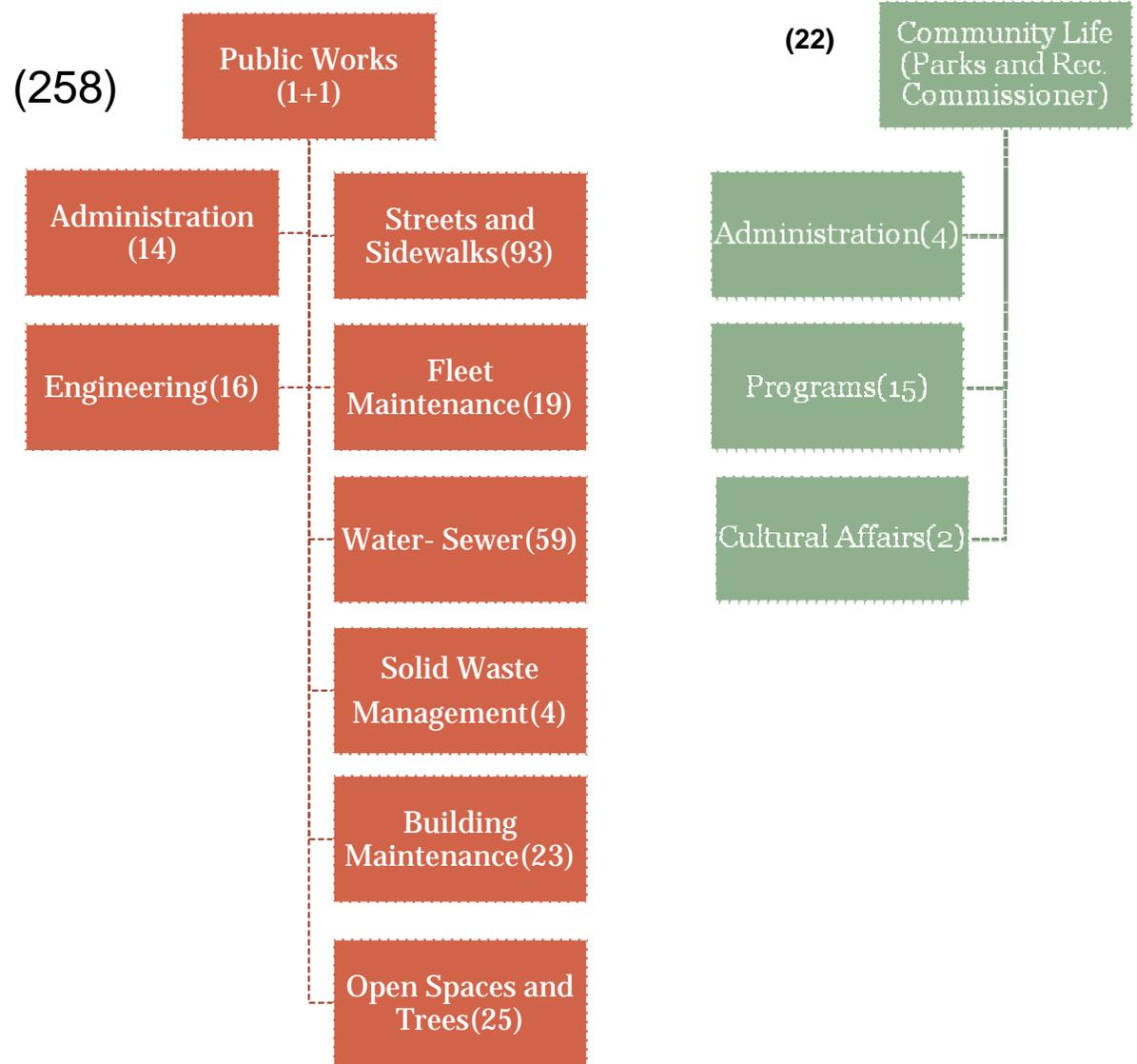


Merging of Maintenance Functions



Proposed Organizational Structure

Capital
Planner (1)



Rationale for Change



- **Consolidate similar functions**
 - Create synergy, leverage capability
 - Find efficiencies
 - Eliminate duplication

- **Separate disparate functions**
 - Bring much needed focus
 - Build expertise and versatility

Additional Benefits



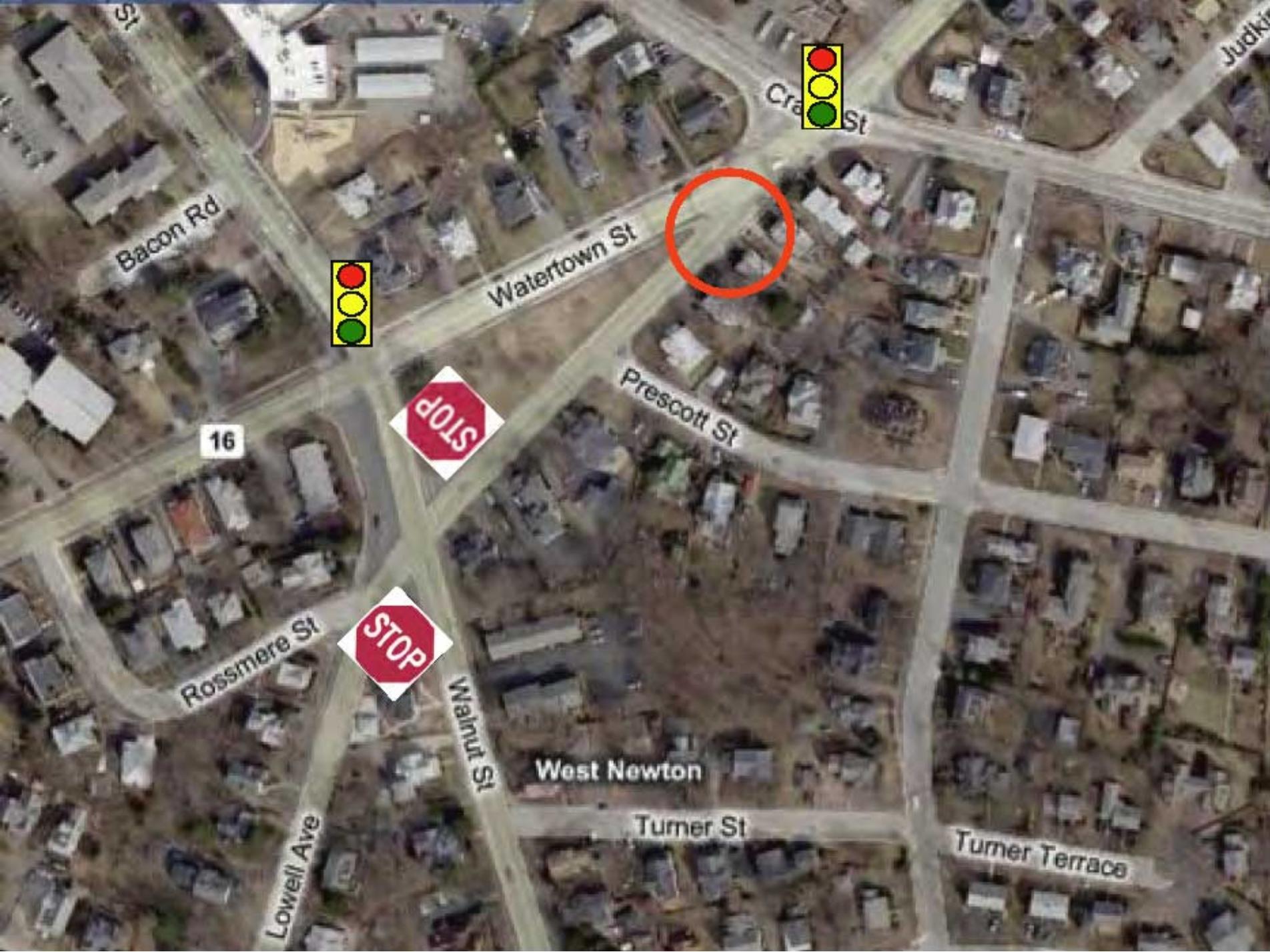
- **Leadership opportunities for capable managers**
- **No addition to staff, potential reduction**
- **Streamlined emergency operations**

Lowell Ave / Watertown St / Crafts St / Walnut St

Docket # 368-08

Request for design approval of
improvements at

Lowell Ave/Crafts St/ Walnut St triangle



Bacon Rd

16

Rossmere St

Lowell Ave

Watertown St

Walnut St

West Newton

Prescott St

Turner St

Turner Terrace

Cranston St

Judkins St



Docket Item History

- 11/3/04: PS&T approves Yield sign
- 7/13/05: PS&T approves Stop sign

- 10/17/07: Trial # 1 begins: no access from Watertown St to Lowell Ave
- 10/24/07: Left-turn arrow added for westbound Watertown St
- 11/15/07: Traffic Council hearing to discuss Trial # 1

- 3/20/08: Traffic Council approves Trial # 2
- 5/1/08: Trial # 2 begins: Full closure of Lowell Ave @ Watertown St
- 5/22/08: Traffic Council hearing- approved Trial # 2
- 11/19/08: Public Facilities Committee meeting

Trial # 1



Trial # 2
(closure)

4,500
cars/day

2,300
cars/day

(3/13/08 during trial)



16

Bacon Rd

Watertown St

Cra St

Prescott St

Rossmore St

Walnut St

West Newton

Turner St

Turner Terrace

Lowell Ave

Judk



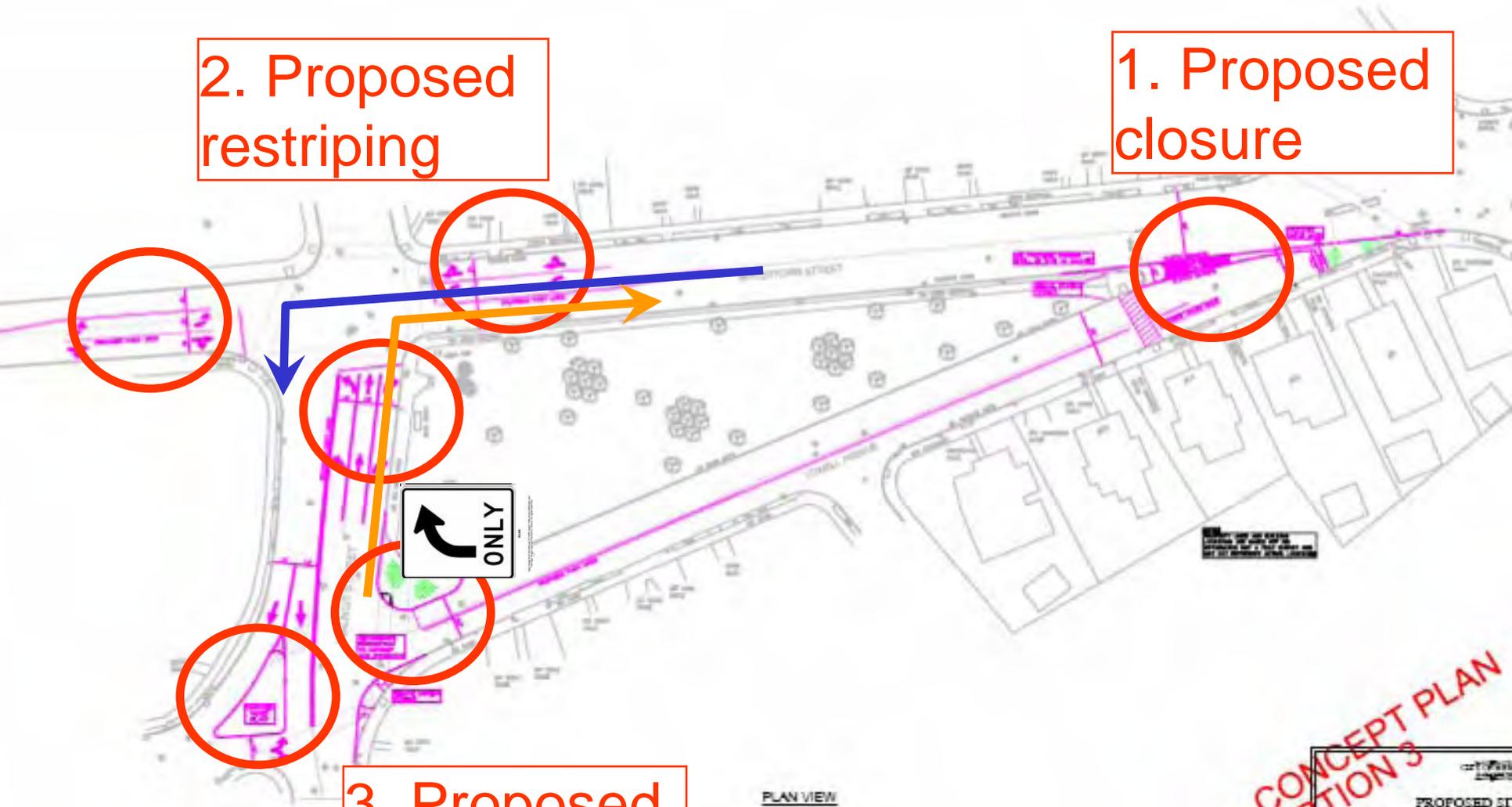
Crash Rate Data

	Pre-Closure (3-year data)	Post-Closure (18-month data)	District 4 Average
Watertown/ Walnut	0.52	0.23	0.78
Watertown/ Crafts/Lowell	1.43	0.74	0.78
Walnut/Lowell	1.33	0.13	0.58

Proposed Improvements

2. Proposed
restriping

1. Proposed
closure

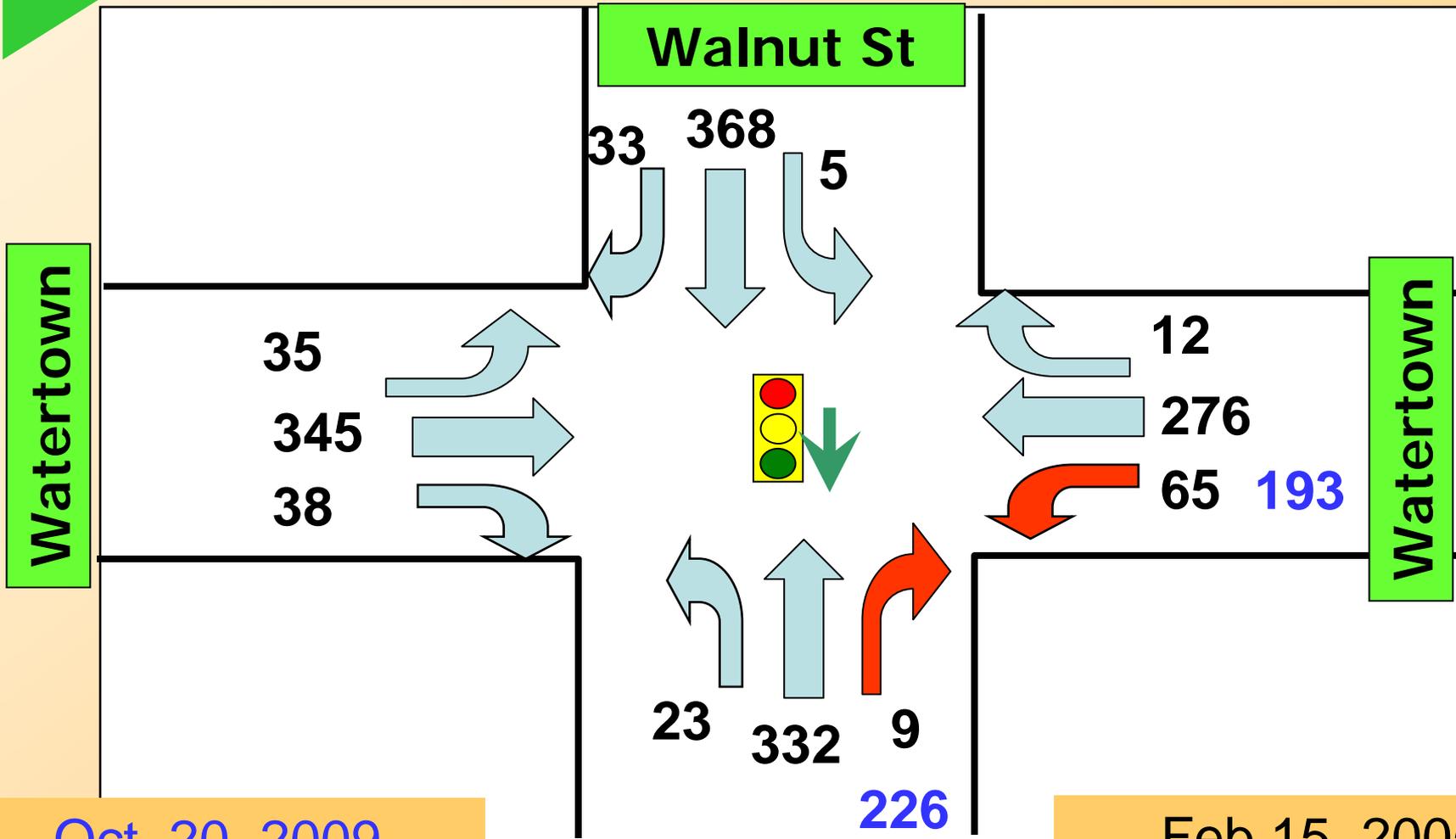


3. Proposed
islands

PLAN VIEW

CONCEPT PLAN
SECTION 3
PROPOSED ST

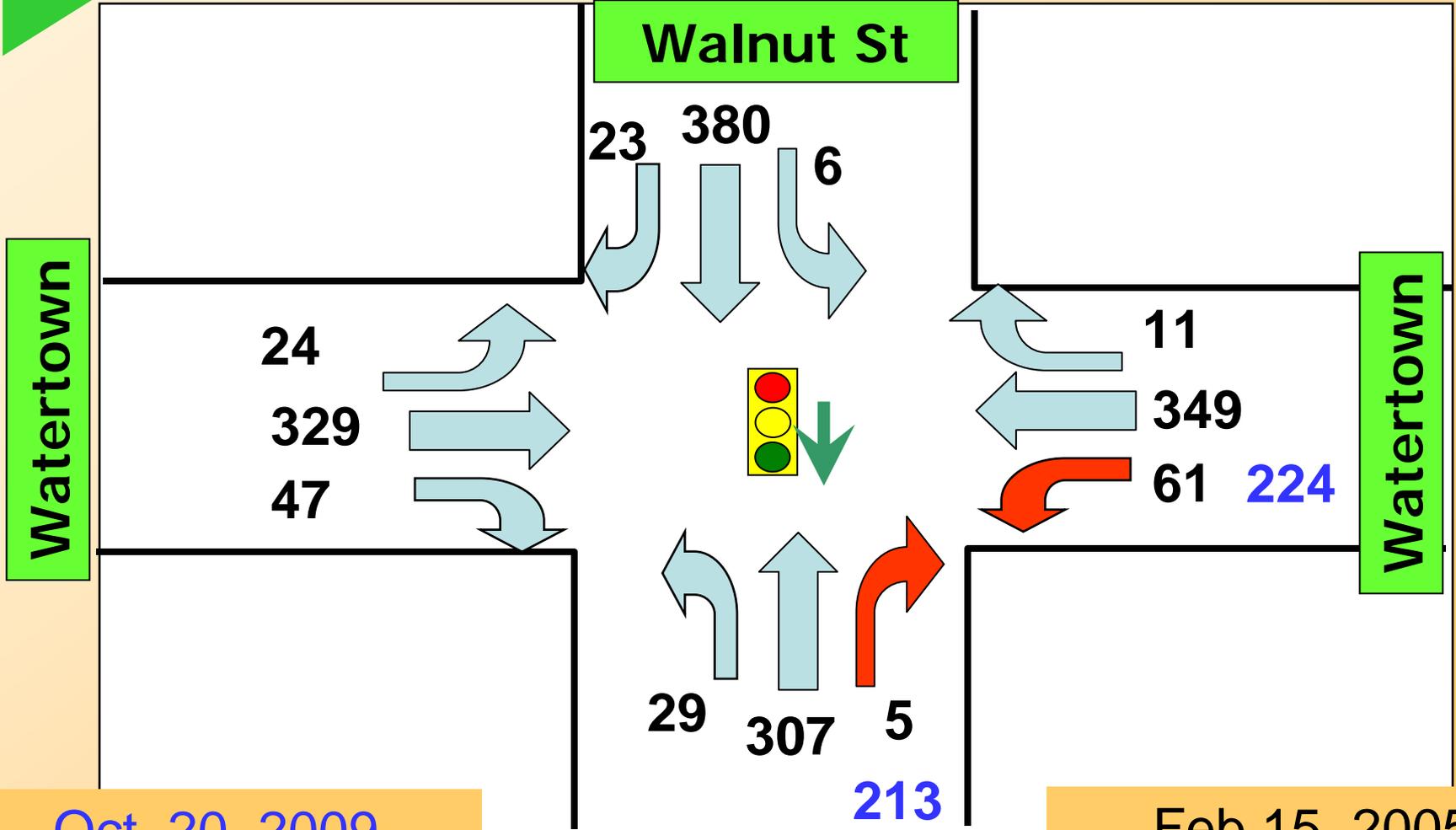
Walnut St/ Watertown St



Oct. 20, 2009
Morning Peak Hour

Feb. 15, 2005
Morning Peak Hour

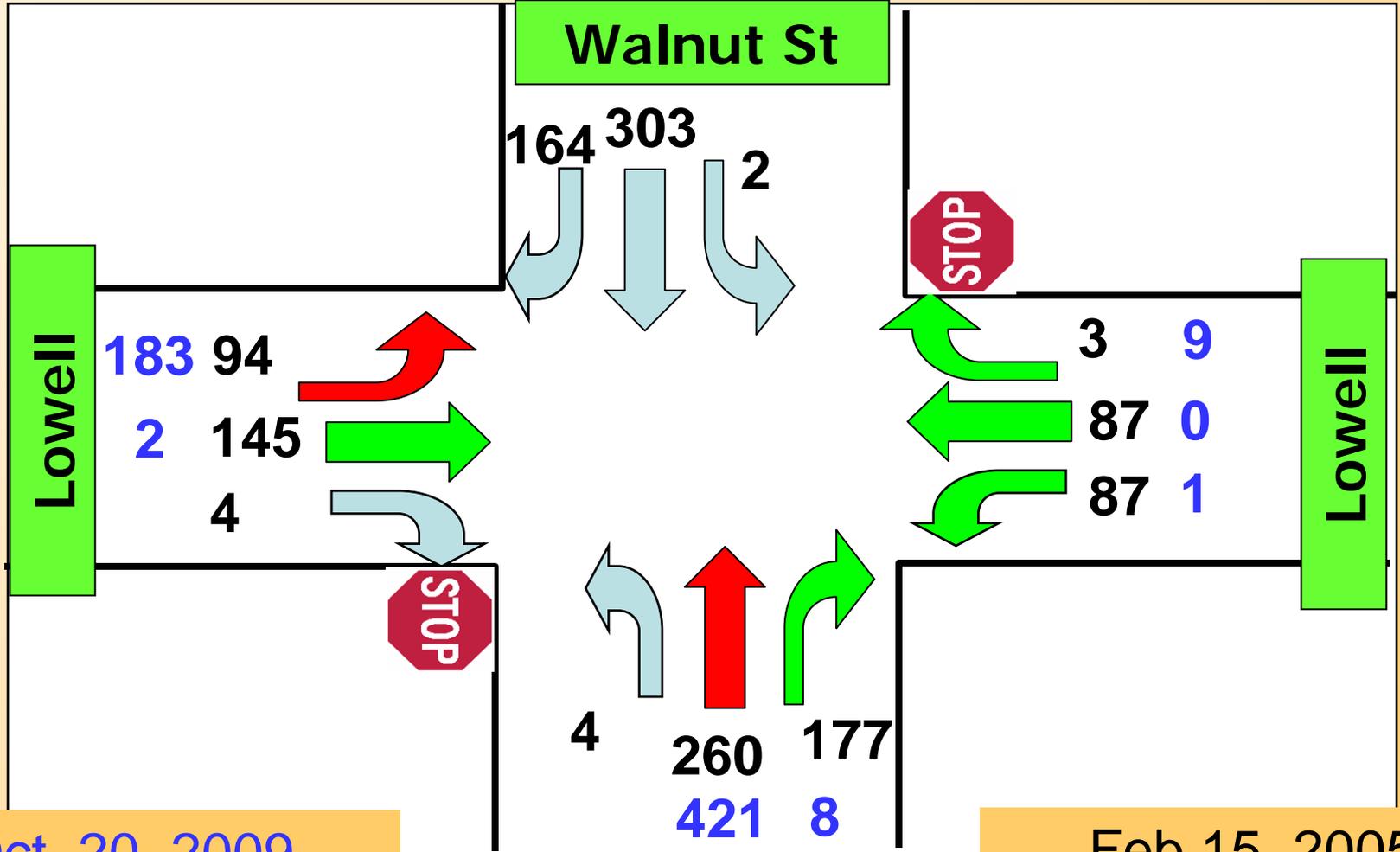
Walnut St/ Watertown St



Oct. 20, 2009
Evening Peak Hour

Feb. 15, 2005
Evening Peak Hour

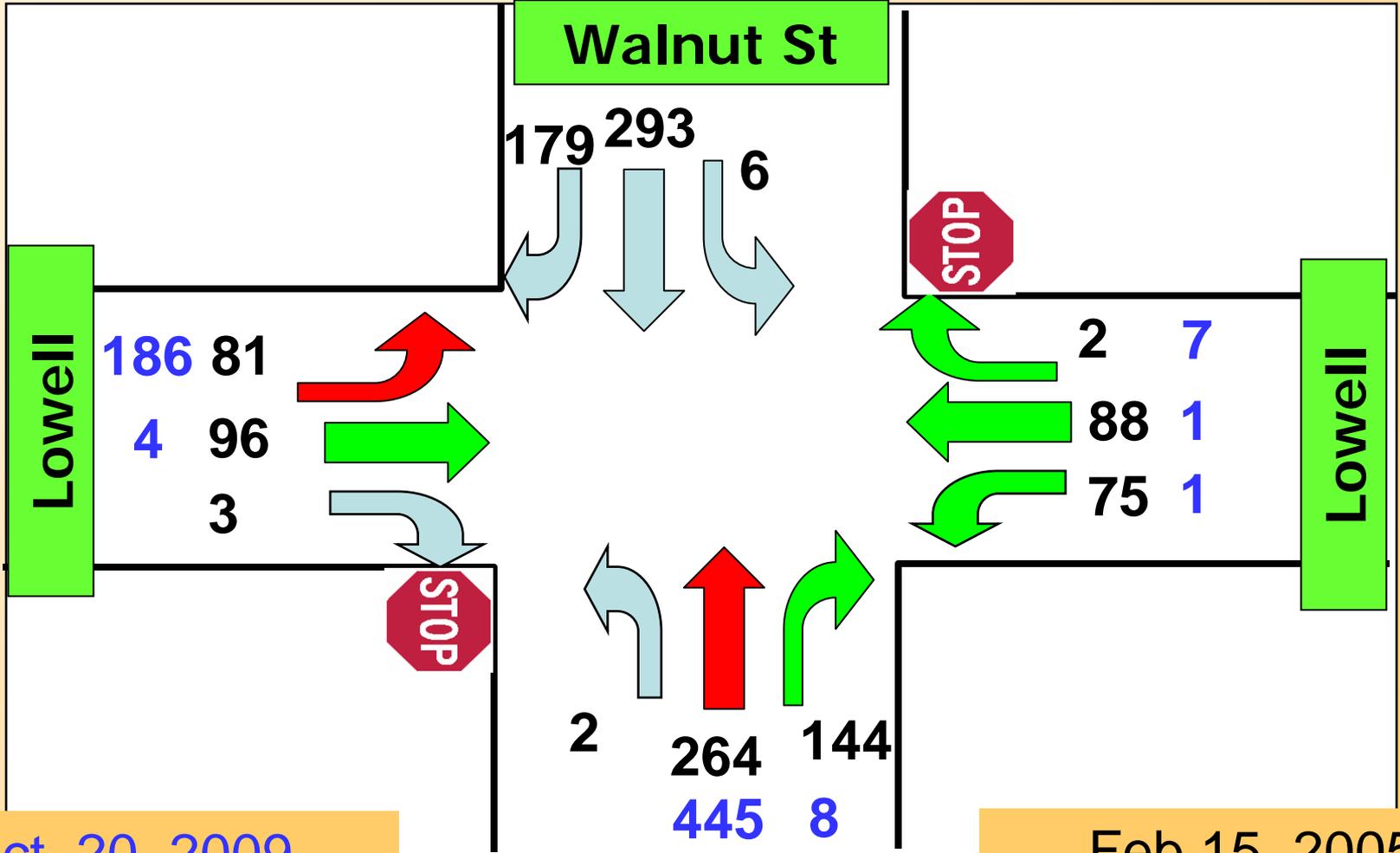
Walnut St/ Lowell Ave



Oct. 20, 2009
Morning Peak Hour

Feb. 15, 2005
Morning Peak Hour

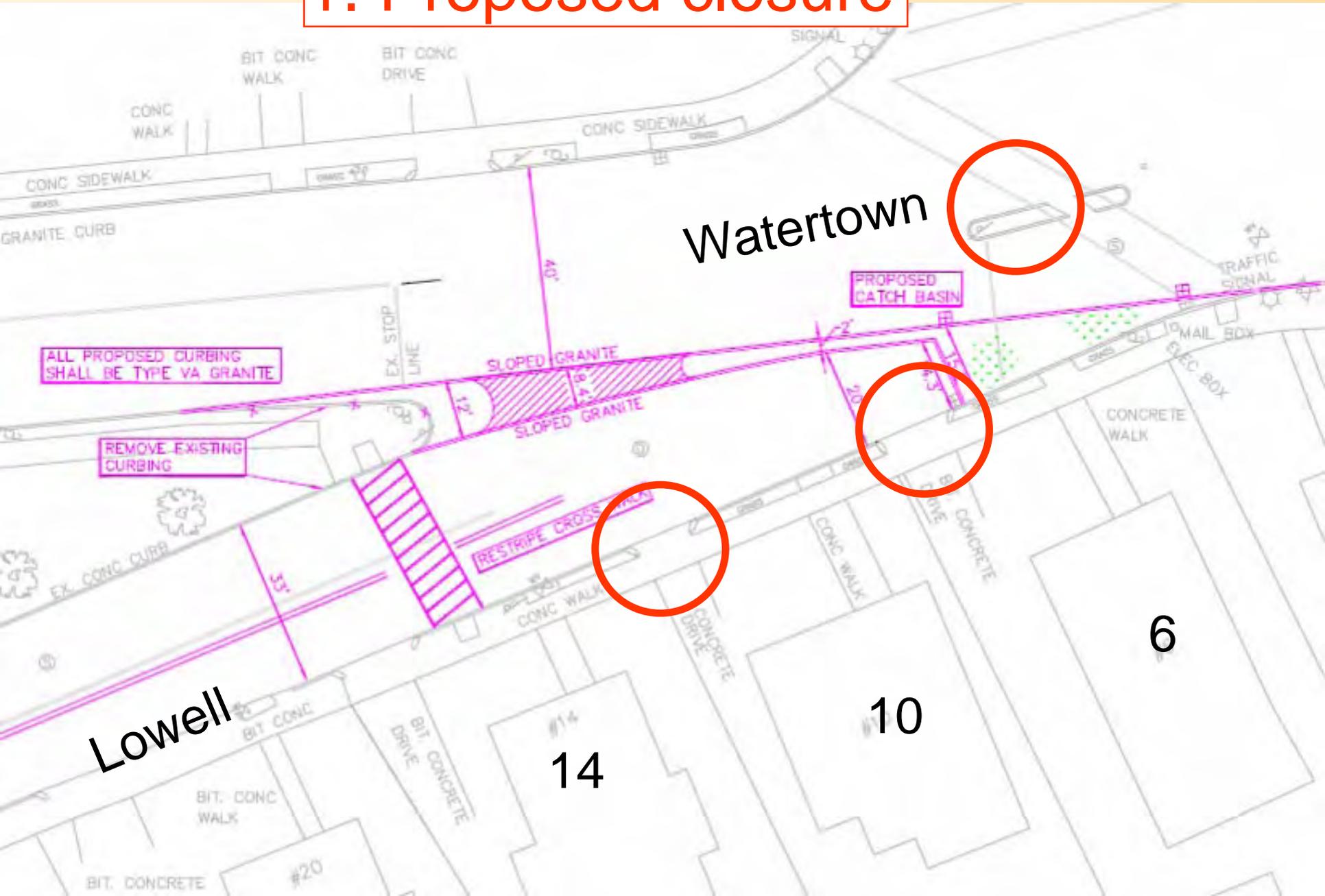
Walnut St/ Lowell Ave



Oct. 20, 2009
Evening Peak Hour

Feb. 15, 2005
Evening Peak Hour

1. Proposed closure



Watertown

Lowell

6

10

14

#20

ALL PROPOSED CURBING SHALL BE TYPE VA GRANITE

REMOVE EXISTING CURBING

RESTRIP CROSSWALK

PROPOSED CATCH BASIN

SLOPED GRANITE

SLOPED GRANITE

CONC SIDEWALK

BIT CONC WALK

BIT CONC DRIVE

CONC SIDEWALK

GRANITE CURB

EX. STOP LINE

SIGNAL

TRAFFIC SIGNAL

MAIL BOX

ELEC. BOX

CONCRETE WALK

EX. CONC CURB

BIT CONC

BIT. CONC WALK

BIT. CONCRETE DRIVE

CONC WALK

CONCRETE DRIVE

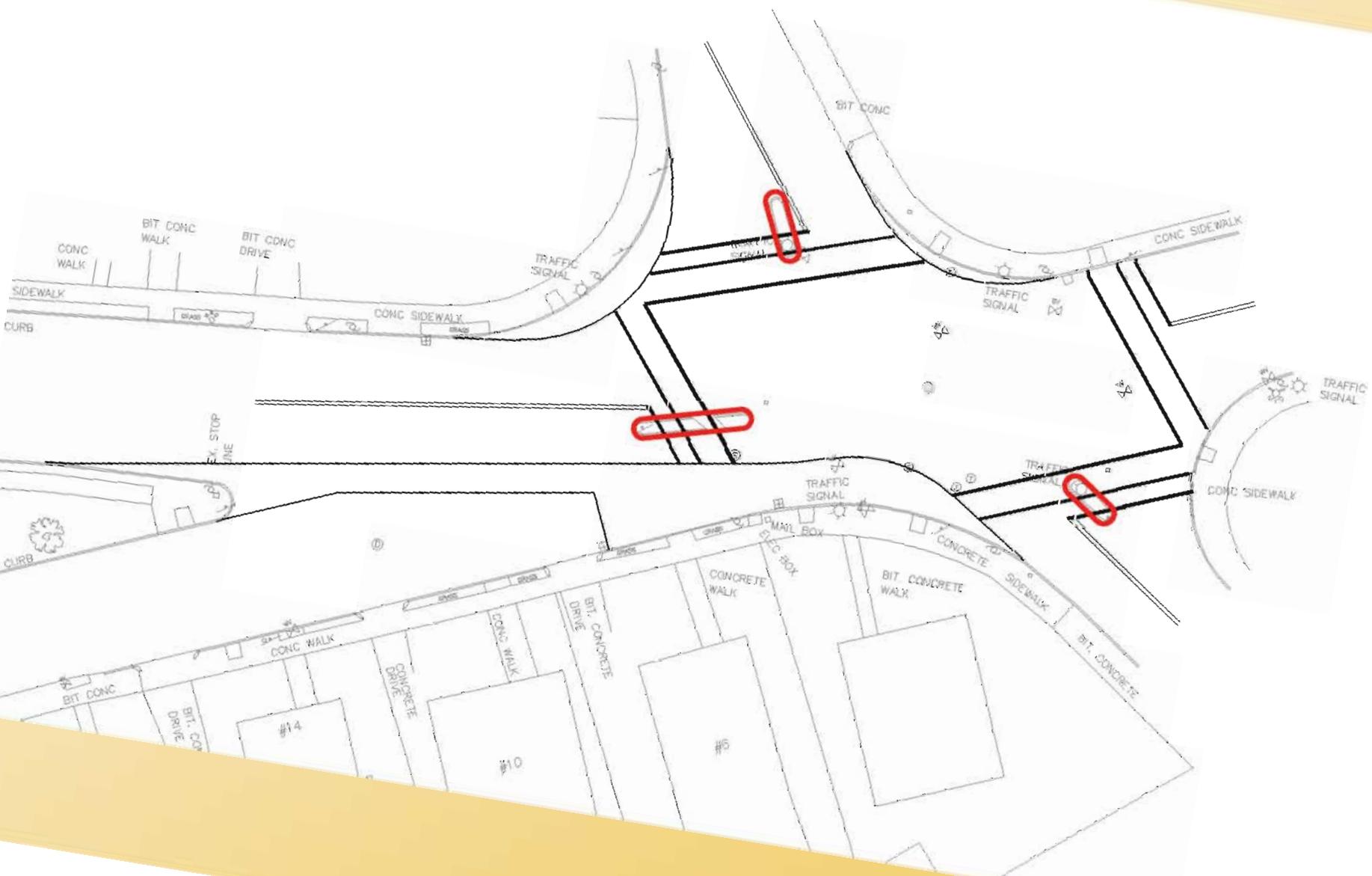
CONC WALK

BIT. CONCRETE DRIVE

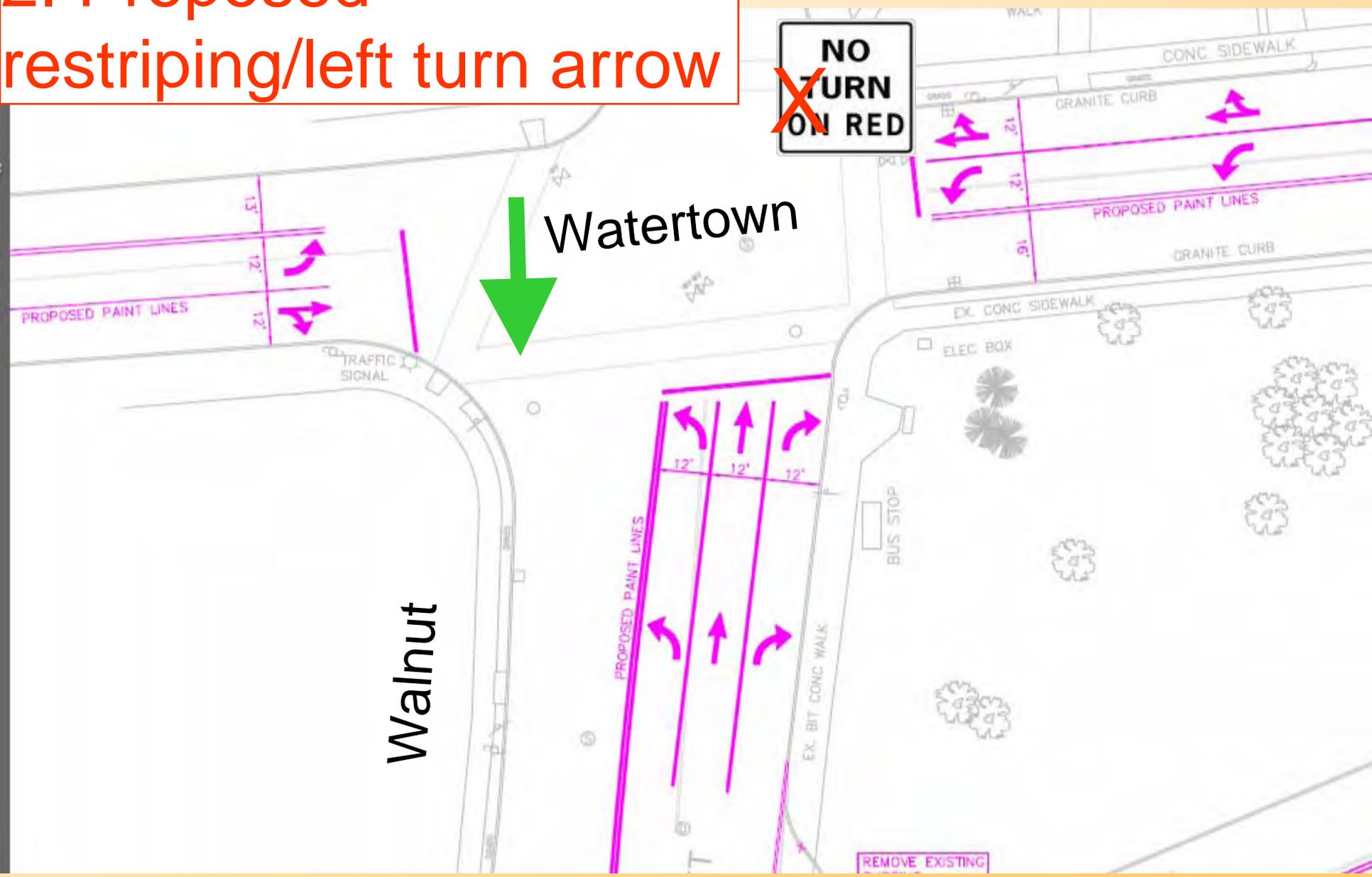
Lowell Ave at Watertown/Crafts







2. Proposed restriping/left turn arrow



Walnut

Watertown

~~NO
TURN
ON RED~~

REMOVE EXISTING

New lane painting on Walnut St at Watertown St



